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ABSTRACT

This study explores the ability of shared governance systems to make institutional hard decisions, focusing particularly on discontinuance of academic programs. A case study method examined shared governance processes at four research institutions to identify themes and patterns across the institutional decision-making process. Between 11 and 16 individuals at each institution were interviewed using structured, open-ended questions; additionally, meeting minutes, institutional reports, other relevant documents, and newspaper accounts were reviewed. Data was analyzed within and across the four cases. The study found that: (1) in all cases, central administrators initiated and led the process; (2) while faculty at all four institutions were involved in the process, both through and outside formal governance structures, at each institution one group actively participated in determining which programs to close while the other tried to dissuade decision makers from closing specific units; and (3) in three of the four institutions, trustees played only a peripheral role approving the decision of the institution. The findings point to legitimacy of the process as the centerpiece of shared governance; despite variations in the degree in which the process was shared, no faculty at any institution complained about lack of involvement nor did administrators complain that faculty were too involved. (Contains 38 references.) (CH)

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The Role of Shared Governance in Institutional Hard Decisions: Enabler or Antagonist?

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This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held in San Antonio, Texas, November 18-21, 1999. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

The Role of Shared Governance in Institutional Hard Decisions: Enabler or Antagonist?

Abstract:
The discussion on institutional governance and change is muddled by those interested in carving out a strong role for faculty (AAUP) or for administrators and trustees (AGB). This study explores empirically the ability of shared governance systems to make institutional hard decisions, in this instance discontinue academic programs. The four cases suggests that shared governance can productively lead to difficult decisions. The paper offers suggestions for effective campus governance.

Many colleges and universities are desperately responding to changing environments that include increased economic pressure, new technology, non-traditional competitors, and increased public discontent and criticisms of being unresponsive. The required and difficult solutions tend to be the "re" words so prevalent in organizational life throughout the 1990s— restructuring, reducing, reallocating, and refocusing; strategies with which higher education struggles.

Many suggest higher education's difficulties with change are due to shared governance (Association of Governing Boards, 1996; Benjamin, Carroll, Jacobi, Krop, & Shires, 1993; Kennedy, 1994; Schuster, Smith, Corvak, & Yamada, 1994). Cole (1994), as provost at Columbia University, articulated the difficulties:

> It is no longer possible for research universities to afford excellence in all areas of knowledge .... Nonetheless, there has been far more talk about the need to make critical choices than a willingness to engage directly the problems associated with choice.... The fundamental problem ... has more to do with basic ambiguity over governance than with the ability to articulate alternatives. Who has the authority... to make such choices? What are the processes by which the choices of the decision makers are legitimated within the university community? What is the role of faculty, students, administrative leaders, trustees, and alumni in making such choices? (p. 5-6).

Others render a more harsh judgment; one group says the current "governance system virtually makes inevitable the inability of institutions and systems to set priorities, focus missions, and implement choice among academic programs" (Benjamin, Carroll, Jacobi, Krop, & Shires 1993, p. 28).

All do not criticize shared governance. Some argue it involves many people thus increasing the likelihood of a change being institutionalized and having greater impact (Curry,

1992). It creates arenas for dissent and debate (Walker, 1979) that allow for changes to be modified, and guarantees accountability and faculty involvement (Rosovsky, 1990). Changes also are more likely to be implemented when discussed thoroughly and altered to fit the local situation (Levine, 1980). Without faculty support and acceptance a change most likely will not last, nor will it have significant impact (Birnbaum, 1992; Walker, 1979).

As environments continue to change and institutions are faced with more complicated and intense challenges, the demands on shared governance to act, to act quickly, and in the ways beneficial to the institution will increase (Benjamin, Carroll, Jacobi, Krop, & Shires, 1993; Kennedy, 1994). Dill and Helm (1988) noted even ten years ago, "the substance of governance has changed" (p. 323) as "maintenance" decisions such as allocation of incremental budgets, modifications to the curriculum, and issues of faculty life are replaced with "strategic-policy making," such as tackling high stakes challenges related to the changing nature of scholarship and prioritizing among programs. This shift places an even heavier burden on governance.

The preponderance of literature on shared governance and institutional change mostly consists of opinions, typically by those interested in carving out a stronger role for senior administrators and trustees or for faculty. The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the ability (or inability) of shared governance to facilitate tough institutional choices. For this study, shared governance is defined as the system, composed of structures and processes, through which faculty, administrators and other campus constituents make collective institutional decisions (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 1996; IMHE/OECD, 1999).

Much of the current thinking on shared governance is shaped by the 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities (AAUP, 1995), jointly formulated by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB). The Statement, although not intended to serve as a blueprint for institutional decision making, outlines roles for faculty, administrators and trustees in governance decisions. For example, it suggests that issues such as managing the endowment fall to the trustees, maintaining and creating new resources to the president, and developing the curriculum to the faculty. Not all decisions neatly fall into the domain of one of the three groups. It notes that much of institutional governance is (or should

be) conducted jointly. Questions over general education policy, the framing and execution of long-range plans, budgeting and presidential selection should be decided jointly.

The Statement may cause as much confusion as clarity. Because of its broad categories of responsibilities, different groups can easily make the case that a specific decision falls into their domain. For example, how can an institution determine if a change such as offering a new continuing education program is the responsibility of the president, who, according to the Statement, is responsible for maintaining and creating new resources; the faculty, who are responsible for the curriculum; or trustees, who are the conduit between the public with its needs and the institution? Or is this new initiative part of the long-range plans, which the Statement identifies as a joint effort? If so, is participation equal? Who takes the lead on institutional decisions most likely depends on where one sits and the case each party can make for ownership. When high stakes are involved, the probability of conflict over who decides most likely rises.

The High Stakes Challenges of Academic Program Discontinuance

The institutional "hard decision" in this study was academic program discontinuance. This decision can be extremely difficult as outcomes can be emotionally charged (Dill & Sporn, 1995), faculty can lose their jobs and have their life's work interrupted (American Association of University Professors, 1995), and the cuts have the potential to threaten institutions' core values and alter institutional identities (Melchiori, 1982). Program discontinuance also tends to occur under constrained financial times (Gumport & Prusser, 1997; Levine, 1997; Slaughter, 1993).

Discontinuing academic programs on most campuses is a last ditch effort (Breneman, 1993; Yezer, 1992) and one which is painful and emotional for those involved (Hardy, 1993). Its outcomes are likely to have an adverse impact on some; people might not believe that the institution should engage in it; and leaders are inexperienced at making that type of decision (Cameron, 1983; Dougherty, 1979; Levine, Rubin, & Wolohojian, 1981). Combine that with the fact that the academy is highly participative and grounded in a history of collegiality, shared governance, and professional prerogative (Bess, 1988; Birnbaum, 1988; Hardy, 1990), and one can begin to understand the stresses of program discontinuance on shared governance. The difficulty of program termination is intensified as through shared governance mechanisms faculty may be making decisions to close their colleagues' departments, and potentially their own. Program discontinuance, because it involves curricular decisions, institutional financial well-being, and institutional strategy, falls into the gray area of shared governance and cannot

simply be decided independently by faculty, administrators or trustees (Gumport, 1993). It is not a decision simply about the curriculum for the faculty, about institutional strategy for trustees or about the institution's financial well-being for administrators. (For a further discussion of program discontinuance, please see Eckel, 1998).

Conceptual Framework

Because institutional "governance concerns power: who is in charge; who makes decisions; who has a voice, and how loud is that voice?" (Rosovsky, 1990, p. 261), this study adopted a framework concerned with interest group struggle to reach a specific set of outcomes, in this study discontinuing academic programs, or for some, preventing programs from being terminated. Interest group struggle is about power and who has it. These are central components when no single group has the ability to dictate decisions (Baldridge, 1971; Bolman & Deal, 1992), such as in university decision making about academic retrenchment. These core decisions typically cannot be made and implemented without the consent of multiple interest groups (Association of Governing Boards, 1996; Gumport, 1993; Schuster, Smith, Corak & Yamada, 1994). "If there is an issue at hand that the faculty cares deeply about and you can't persuade them, you certainly can't bulldoze them." (Walker, 1979, p. 10).

The fundamental assumption in this framework is that organizations are comprised of coalitions of interest groups in which decisions are made based upon power and conflict, not for optimizing objectives (Baldridge, 1971; Pfeffer & Salanick, 1980). Subgroups must negotiate with one another to build coalitions and pool their respective influence to generate desired outcomes (Bolman & Deal, 1992; Pfeffer, 1981). Focusing on the subgroups involved in the process and on the ways in which they interact helps answer the questions who has a voice and how loud is that voice? And how are decision made? Shared governance becomes the arena in which different sub-groups gather to make institutional choices (Birnbaum, 1988).

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the ability (or inability) of shared governance to facilitate tough institutional choices. Following the lead of the Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities (AAUP, 1995), and because many discussions of governance do so as well, this study viewed faculty, administrators and trustees as the interest groups involved in program closure decisions.

Therefore, this study sought to understand the extent to which shared governance can make hard decisions and facilitate institutional change. In difficult institutional decisions, what

role does shared governance play, to what extent is decision making shared, and which decisions are made separately by faculty, administrators and trustees, and which are made collectively?

The Study

This study investigated shared governance processes at four research universities. The intent was to identify themes and patterns across institutional decision making processes; thus a multiple case study method was adopted with the hope of explanation building (Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Yin, 1994). An institution to be eligible for this study must have discontinued at least one academic program within the last seven years that had not been reinstated, was classified as a research I or II university, and was accessible. I sought to identify institutions that had similar structures, cultures (i.e., research faculty culture as compared to teaching faculty culture), and purposes because retrenchment decisions may vary by institutional type (El-Khawas, 1994). I used the Carnegie classification system as a tool to identify institutions more similar than different. The institutions—the University of Maryland at College Park, Oregon State University; the University of Rochester (NY), and Kent State University (OH)[1]—were selected from a list of universities that had discontinued programs generated from searches of The Chronicle of Higher Education, Academe, Trusteeship.

Between 11 and 16 individuals from each institution were interviewed using structured, open-ended question protocols. Participants included individuals involved in the discontinuance process, such as key central administrators or members of involved governance committees and individuals from the units that were terminated who might still be on campus. In addition to interviews, the researcher reviewed meeting minutes, institutional reports, speeches, other relevant campus documents and on and off-campus newspaper accounts (Merriam, 1988). The documents were obtained from informants, through meetings with campus archivists, and from searches of electronic data bases.

From the collected data, case reports were drafted that included all of the potentially relevant collected material (Yin, 1994). Out of the larger case reports, each case study was crafted telling the story of the discontinuance process. Two three-step data analysis processes were then used—pattern coding, memoing, and proposition writing (Miles & Huberman, 1994)—first within each case and then across the four cases.

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[1] Campus leaders at all four institutions declined offers of institutional anonymity.

Findings

This next section provides brief synopses that describe the governance processes used to close academic programs at each of the four research universities and explores shared governance processes involved in bringing about and impeding program closures. These four cases show that shared governance can plan a facilitative role in institutional change, particularly difficult changes such as program closure. Of the two colleges and 25 programs or departments closed across the four institutions, only one (at UR) was overturned because of faculty resistance.

University of Maryland at College Park

On April 24, 1992, the College Park Senate of the University of Maryland at College Park (UMCP) approved recommendations to eliminate seven academic departments and one college which for all intents and purposes concluded the discontinuance process begun at the start of the 1990-1991 academic year.

The governance and academic decision making apparatus at UMCP included the following: Academic Planning Advisory Committee (APAC)—a joint faculty-administration committee, advisory to the provost, and created 10 years prior to review financial implications of changes in academic programs; The College Park Senate—the campus governance body comprised predominately of elected faculty but includes students and staff; The Programs, Curricular and Courses Committee (PCC)—a standing committee of the senate that deals with curricular changes; and The president and the provost—long-time campus citizens who believed in the value of shared decision making and saw the senate as important to institutional decision making.

In the fall of 1990, the provost persuaded campus executives that reducing the number of academic units and departments was a wise move while continuing the across-the-board reductions to compensate for its share of the rescinded $24.5 million (10% of the university's state budget). In the previous academic year, the campus had faced a cut of $20.5 million, bringing the two year total reductions to $45 million in public funds. The provost saw the financial recession as a bona fide crisis, but one that could be used as a lever to improve the institution.

The provost asked the Executive Committee of the Senate (acting in lieu of the Senate because of the short time frame set by the provost) to develop a set of criteria and principles for discontinuance, which it did in a document called Criteria for Planning. Concurrently, the

provost requested a report from each college dean identifying programs to close. He strongly suggested that each college form its own "mini-APAC" to make recommendations. Upon submission of the dean's reports, APAC conduct its own reviews starting with the reports submitted by the deans, and including available internal or external program reviews and meetings with deans, faculty, and department chairs from all of the colleges. From this work, the Provost and APAC identified nine departments and two colleges for potential elimination. Most of the recommendations closely followed those of the deans and deviations occurred in only three cases, two of which were the proposed elimination of two colleges. Based upon the work of APAC, the Provost drafted Preserving Enhancement, the first preliminary report, which he said was open to debate and modification, and submitted it to the president seven months after the Labor Day recision.

The provost, his staff, and APAC then organized a series of campus-wide sub-committees, which were not asked to address the validity of the recommendations, but to investigate the implications of closing the unit on the campus and the state. Each sub-committee was composed of faculty from various departments within and outside of the college and at least one faculty member from the targeted unit. Approximately 120 faculty became involved in the discontinuance process through these sub-committees, equivalent to 10% of UMCP's total full-time, tenure-track faculty. At the conclusion of the sub-committee work, APAC held a series of open hearings for department supporters to make their cases and influence the decisions.

Based upon the information gathered through the summer sub-committees and the open hearings, the provost, with guidance from APAC, produced a second report, Hard Choices: The Next Step in Preserving Enhancement at the end of January, 1992. This report identified seven departments (Agriculture and Extension Education; Housing and Design; Radio, Television and Film; Urban Studies and Planning; Industrial, Technological and Occupational Education; Recreation; and Textiles and Consumer Economics) and one college (Human Ecology) for elimination. Hard Choices not only identified programs to be cut, but removed three units previously slated for closure—the Departments of Hearing and Speech and Nuclear Engineering, and the College of Library and Information Sciences.

The recommendations in Hard Choices were passed to the College Park Senate at the end of January, 1992 for action by the close of the academic yea, whose decisions would then be forwarded to the president, and ultimately, to the board of trustees. By chance, in the year the

cuts were to occur all of the Senate committee chairs became vacant, which allowed the Senate chair-elect to deliberately fill the PCC chair vacancy with a respected faculty leader. Senators were deliberately appointed to PCC who also were well respected. PCC reviewed the information assembled by APAC, and collected on its own, conducted interviews, and held another set of open hearings. PCC then drafted a report that unanimously accepted APAC's recommendations. This was put forth to the Senate for a vote. The Senate Executive Committee scheduled three meetings to consider PCC's recommendations, but they were not needed as all the decisions were made the first day. At the conclusion of the voting, the Senate had overwhelmingly supported the recommendations.

Oregon State University

On Thursday, February 7, 1991, the president of Oregon State University (OSU) informed faculty of the recommended closures of one college and 13 academic departments he would make to the Chancellor, who, in turn, would submit his recommendations to the Board of Higher Education. Action by the Board would be forwarded and made official by an act of the State Legislature.

Strong deans in autonomous colleges mark OSU's governance history. Faculty involvement varied. In some colleges the dean and associate deans made most decisions. Other colleges operated through a council of department chairs or similar structure, and still others filled college committees through faculty elections. At the institutional level, the Faculty Senate was advisory to the president and provost. The Faculty Consultative Group (FCG), an emergency group of the Senate, is constituted when program cuts are imminent as is required by the institution's policy for discontinuing programs. The 12-person FCG is composed of members of the Faculty Senate executive committee and the chairs of three senate subcommittees. According to the procedural document, this group should "confidentially offer constructive suggestions and comment" to the president and the provost. The president, a long-time faculty member became president in 1984 after a stint in the Reagan White House. The provost, a newcomer to OSU, was hired in 1985 as the first provost of the campus following an administrative restructuring. Much of the institutional decision making occurred through personal communications between the president and/or the provost, and college administrators, mid-level university administrators or key faculty members. The final actors in the governance process resided off-campus: the Chancellor, the Board of Higher Education, and the State Legislative Assembly. These bodies make decisions

on major institutional changes following campus recommendations. Decisions are not final until acted upon by the state legislature.

At the time of the president's announcement to close programs, the university expected a mandated reduction of $13.4 million each year in its 1991-1993 bi-annium budget resulting from Ballot Measure Five, a voter initiated tax cut. The chancellor gave all public institutions three months to craft their recommendations so he could forward a system-wide plan to the board. The three months, according to the president, drastically reduced consultation and deliberation. As a result of a state revenue shortfall three years earlier where OSU merged two departments, the president and the provost charged three deans to draft two documents that were accepted with slight modification by the Senate and ultimately by the president. The first document, Guidelines for Program Redirection, laid out the process and guiding philosophies, and its companion document, Criteria for Program Reduction, Termination and Reorganization, spelled out the criteria.

During the 1990-1991 discontinuance process, the campus followed its Guidelines for Program Redirection: The president and provost charged the dean of each college to develop a plan specifying which programs would be discontinued. Each dean had a "budget hearing" before the provost, after which the cabinet began outlining its recommendations for the FCG to review. The senate convened the FCG to respond to the president's recommendations and to explore and articulate potential implications of the recommendations. At this point, the confidentiality clause from the OSU policy created problems as the members of the FCG had difficulty obtaining information. They could not go to deans, department heads or faculty in the targeted units to collect information or to explore hunches because they had to treat the procedures and the identity of the targeted programs with a high level of confidentiality.

The FCG strongly recommended certain programs slated for closure be taken off the list because of potentially damaging spillover effects. After discussions with the FCG, the president and the provost, with the help of the rest of the cabinet, began developing the final recommendations. They had to balance a number of competing priorities: First, they made sure that no recommendation would create significant adverse effects in other units or institutions outside the university. Second, the president and the provost had to coordinate their efforts with the Chancellor's office and other public institutions to prevent the system from eliminating similar programs across the state. To many faculty and college administrators these constraints

created a feeling that important campus decisions were being made in a black box. Many interviewed said they did not know how the final decisions actually came about. Once the coordination among other institutions was complete, the president and provost readied the list for public announcement identifying the units to be closed and made the announcement.

University of Rochester

On November 16, 1995, the dean of the College at the University of Rochester (UR)[2], with the president and provost present, announced at an emergency meeting of the Council of Department Chairs that as part of a larger effort intended to return the institution to more solid financial ground, labeled the Renaissance Plan, four Ph.D. programs would be "suspended."[3] Four programs, Chemical Engineering, Mathematics, Linguistics, and Comparative Literature, would be prevented from recruiting graduate students, thus in effect terminating those doctoral programs. Four additional doctoral programs would be "refocused," meaning a reduction in the number of graduate students and a narrowing of the department's focus. The hope was that the institution would reduce faculty size and departmental expenditures by an estimated $3 million. UR, a private tuition-dependent institution, fell on hard financial times in the early 1990s—the results of enhancing research and graduate programs that brought in little tuition money, a costly period of endowment mismanagement, a rapidly increasing tuition discount ratio (35% to 50% in ten years), and an unsustainable 12% draw on endowment.

The primary body for faculty governance in the College is the Council of Department Chairs (CDC), a formal group that meets at least once a month and includes all of the department chairs and directors, chaired by the dean. Decisions not made in the CDC usually are made through extensive consultation among the president, provost, and dean who formed a leadership triumvirate. The president was newly hired (July 1994) and charged with solving the financial problems. He intentionally selected an institutional insider as the new provost. The dean, a long time faculty member, resigned in visible protest against actions taken by the previous administration but was asked by the new president to stay on to lead the change effort. Two

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[2] The College was the largest of six colleges at the University of Rochester and the only one facing program closures. It was created in a 1994 merger between the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and is responsible for the bulk of undergraduate education and much of the non-professional graduate education. It holds a separate endowment.

[3] Programs were not officially terminated, but rather suspended, a technical term in the State of New York that does not require state permission and leaves open the door for reinstatement.

other campus governance bodies exist, the Faculty Council and Faculty Senate. Neither is influential, nor did they play substantive roles in the discontinuance process.

In one of his first campus-wide communiqués, the president wrote to all faculty articulating his view of the financial problem and the idea of targeted closures. The letter sent "a very important signal to the faculty" about the problem and "set the stage for the subsequent detailed process," said the dean. The dean and the provost also engaged the CDC, the Faculty Council and the Faculty Senate in conversations about the problems and proposed solutions to get their feedback. Beyond formal governance, administrative leaders talked about the problems incessantly and convened informal groups of faculty opinion leaders. The idea of targeted reductions, when broached on campus received favorable agreement.

The dean and the provost held a series of individual meetings with faculty and chairs from each department to collect data and hear faculty opinions first-hand. They interviewed three people from each department: the chair, a department representative identified by the chair, and a representative selected by the department as a whole, totaling 75 meetings in all. Administrators believed this was more feasible than meeting with each of the approximately 340 faculty. Prior to the meetings, the dean sent the interview questions to the College's entire faculty and asked for any comments either in writing or via e-mail. Of the 340 letters the dean sent, he received less than a dozen responses. After the 75 interviews, the dean, provost and president sent another letter to all college faculty re-capping the process and outlining next steps, directly identifying reducing faculty size, targeting the cuts, and closing Ph.D. programs.

At this point in the process senior administrators believed they were the ones who would have to make the ultimate decisions. If they didn't make the decision, the dean said, there might be too much "wriggle room" and that the cuts might be "undone before it is actually completed." This was a hard sell to the faculty, especially those who wanted open hearings or a committee to decide. The dean, provost and president sent a memo in mid-September to the College's faculty outlining how they were planning to proceed and asking for comments. The dean also met with the Faculty Council to review the process to date and discuss how the decisions were ultimately going to be made.

With the assistance of the dean and provost, the president drafted a plan to attend to its financial problems. Prior to unveiling the Renaissance Plan, the president, provost, and dean convened a group of informal campus faculty leaders to get their feedback. This discussion, held

in complete confidence, allowed administrators to see initial reactions, an opportunity to articulate their rationale and their expected outcomes, and a chance to prepare for expected naysayers. The administrators also believed it imperative to get full board support before proceeding. The trustees would provide the needed funds, but more importantly, once signed on, they would not override the administrators' plan. The president orchestrated a special weekend retreat for the board in mid-November to gain their support. They board chair, to show his personal commitment, gave the institution $10 million to implement the Renaissance Plan.

A few days after the board retreat, the dean gave 24-hours notice for an emergency CDC meeting. The morning of the meeting he called each of the affected chairs and told them about that afternoon's forthcoming announcement. At the later meeting, the dean then announced the decisions to close four Ph.D. programs and refocus four others.

Five months later the dean announced that the administration and the Department of Mathematics had reached an agreement to reinstate its Ph.D. program. Upon the announcement of the discontinuance of the mathematics Ph.D., the Mathematics Department faculty raised a national call to arms. The department was able to get negative press in the Sunday New York Times and The Chronicle of Higher Education. The American Mathematical Society (AMS) joined the fight because they believed that if UR could do away with its mathematics Ph.D. program others would follow. Together they organized an extensive publicity campaign to reverse the decision. The UR president received over 200 letters, including several from Nobel laureates, criticizing the proposed action.

Mathematics was the only department able to negotiate with the administration to save its Ph.D. program. As part of the deal to reinstate the doctoral program, Mathematics faculty agreed to improve their teaching and to develop specific course for non-mathematics majors. They also formed new linkages with other units.

Kent State University

In the early spring of 1996, the Dean of the College of Education at Kent State University (KSU), the program coordinator of the Counseling Psychology program, and the chair of the department housing the program, following a series of conversations, decided to discontinue the Ph.D. program in Counseling Psychology. This decision then was approved smoothly by the departmental faculty, the campus' Educational Policies Council, the Faculty Senate and the

institution's Board of Trustees. On September 19, 1996, the Ohio Board of Regents voted unanimously to discontinue the Ph.D. program in Counseling Psychology at KSU.

KSU is a unionized institution with a strong history of faculty governance. Within the College of Education most decisions are made collectively by faculty and the dean. The dean, a long-time administrator and faculty member, then brought all interested faculty into the conversation. Sometimes decisions are made informally; other times they become part of a formal decision making process in the College Advisory Council (CAC). The College of Education's CAC is composed of three faculty elected from each of the three academic departments. CAC decisions are then passed to the Educational Policies Council (EPC), a campus-wide body comprised half of administrators and half of faculty. KSU's faculty union is affiliated with the AAUP and concerns itself primarily with issues of process and violations of the faculty contract.

In 1995-1996, the College of Education was hit with its second budget reduction in four years. At the same time, it was trying to cope with the loss of more than half its faculty because of an early retirement program (40 of 90 faculty) and through normal attrition (an additional 15 faculty). The effect was that the college could not replace departing faculty on a one-to-one basis. One small program lost all of its four faculty. The School Psychology program went from five faculty to one. Counseling Psychology was left with one faculty member from five. That program had to cope simultaneously with two deaths, a third faculty member who retired early and a fourth who was denied tenure. The low number of faculty threatened the two psychology programs' accreditation. The decision to discontinue programs was not intentional or strategic, rather it was created by the circumstances at that time.

To decide which program to invest scarce resources and which to close, college administrators held many formal and informal discussions and challenged college faculty to come up with alternatives. Over the course of the many conversations the dean initiated, it became increasingly clear that Counseling Psychology was not going to receive the needed resources or an infusion of new faculty. The program coordinator, who was the only remaining faculty member in the program, eventually agreed that it would be better to discontinue the program than have it stagger along. This admission allowed the dean to move forward. After the sole faculty member conceded, the CAC discussed the situation and gave the dean its support. Because of the continued widespread discussion by the college's faculty, department

chairs and the dean, the decision to close the Counseling Psychology program did not come as a surprise. The announcement to discontinue the program was made to the students by letter. They were also invited to a special meeting organized by the program coordinator and the chair to discuss the decision and transition for the students.

The decision to close the Ph.D. program in Counseling Psychology met with little resistance and was swiftly approved by the college's CAC, by the EPC and the Faculty Senate at the campus level, and at the university and system levels by the Board of Trustees and the Ohio Board of Regents. Neither the Faculty Senate nor the union became involved because these were decisions that had been made with the approval of the faculty in the related departments and, according to a senator, "if the faculty in the departments are willing to go along with the cuts, then there is not much basis for the Faculty Senate to overturn the decision."

Analysis

This study sought to explore question of the ability of shared governance to bring about institutional "hard decisions" and the roles of key campus interest groups in the process. This analysis first explores the roles the three key interest groups played in the processes and the extent to which decisions were made jointly. The second part outlines the roles played by shared governance in academic program discontinuance.

Who Did What and How

This section explores the questions: What are the roles of faculty, administrators and trustees in institutional hard decisions? What is done independently and collectively? How shared is shared governance when institutions close programs?

Administrators. In all of the cases, central administrators initiated and led the process. At UMCP, administrators decided to undertake program termination and they chose to use APAC as the first decision making body. The provost and the associate provost were the leaders of the process, designing it, determining how to involve people, and shepherding it through the institution. They became partners with faculty in key decisions, but administrators were the individuals who wrote the two primary reports—Preserving Enhancement and Hard Choices—the second of which was forwarded to the senate for response.

At OSU, administrators played a much more independent role than at UMCP. Prior to Ballot Measure Five, a committee of deans drafted the procedures that the campus later followed.

The president and provost held budget hearings with the deans to craft the initial proposal, and they were the ones who made the final decision.

The president, provost and dean at UR crafted and led the process. They sold the process to the faculty, conducted the individual interviews, interpreted the data they collected, garnered board support, and, in the end, made and announced the final decisions. They also intentionally did not create a faculty appeals process, as a "definitive decision" was their goal.

At KSU, the dean of the college and the department chair that housed counseling psychology framed the challenge to the college. They facilitated conversations within the department and college so as to understand the factors driving the decision. They met with the remaining faculty member and, in the end, facilitated his move to a new department.

Faculty Decision Makers. Some faculty were active participants in determining which programs to close and others tried to dissuade decision makers from closing specific units. Both sets of faculty were involved in the discontinuance process both through formal governance structures and outside of them.

At UMCP faculty were active partners with administrators and frequently the leaders of the process. Faculty were involved formally through APAC, PCC, and the senate. They were asked by the provost to develop criteria and principles for the process to follow. The process began through a joint faculty-administrative standing body (APAC), which was instrumental in designing the process and developing the first two sets of recommendations. Faculty were additionally involved through the summer sub-committees in which 120 faculty investigated the implications of recommended closures. Faculty commented during APAC's open hearings, were involved in PCC's investigation (running and participating in their open hearings) and they were responsible for taking the final vote in the College Park Senate.

At OSU, faculty involvement was limited to FCG and, depending upon the college, to helping the dean craft his initial recommendations. The role of faculty at OSU was consultative. Rather than making the actual decisions, like the faculty at UMCP, faculty at OSU provided advice. They helped the administration think through implications and encouraged them to remove some programs on the list. The confidentiality clause and the short time-frame may have limited OSU faculty involvement. In the end, some faculty felt frustrated because confidentiality limited their ability to widen the conversation and collect more information.

Although not the key decision makers, faculty at UR were nevertheless highly involved in the process. Through the CDC, faculty provided needed information (chairs are thought of as the faculty), helped the administration think through issues of quality and productivity, and helped shape the process. Informal faculty leaders were the first to see the Renaissance Plan, helping to polish it and test reaction. One-third of all faculty (75 in all) were involved in the individual interviews, and had other opportunities to participate, of which only a few took advantage. Faculty were kept abreast and discussed the closure process in the Faculty Senate and the Faculty Council.

Two sets of faculty were involved at KSU: faculty within and outside the college. Within the college, faculty were involved informally in the discussions surrounding the inevitable closure. They were also involved in the more formal discussions in the CAC. Outside the college, faculty were involved through the formal decision making processes to approve closures, the EPC and the senate. They also might have become involved through the union if a grievance had been filed.

Faculty resistors worked to prevent closures from occurring. At UMCP, leaders of some departments, such as Recreation and Radio, Television and Film, tried to develop support and curtail the efforts. They spoke out at the two sets of open hearings, and some participated in protests on the steps of the administration building. At KSU and OSU there was little faculty resistance. The closed program at KSU had only one program faculty member and he had conceded when closure became imminent. At OSU, possibly because of the short time-frame and because the long history of financial downturns faculty resistance did not organize. Said one faculty member, "if Ballot Measure Five is fully implemented we would not exist. There really was a feeling of futility."

The most active, and successful, faculty resistors were the mathematics faculty at UR. They played the political game effectively, building supportive coalitions both on- and off-campus to mobilize support. They generated negative attention through major news outlets at a time when the institution was looking to ratchet up its perceived academic value and recruit more talented students. Finally, the faculty leaders were able to negotiate with university administrators and find a middle ground. They did build support from other faculty through shared governing bodies, but their outside activities were what lead to the administrative recision.

Trustees. The final group involved in the discontinuance process was the board of trustees. At none of the campuses did the decision become contentious over board involvement. In three of the cases, the exception being UR, boards played peripheral roles approving the decisions coming from the institution. At UR, the board had to approve both the idea and make the required funding available. Board members attended a retreat prior to the announcement and provided requested support. Additionally, the board chair gave the institution $10 million for implementation.

The sharing of governance. To what extent was governance and decision making shared? The answer to that question varied across institutions. At UMCP, faculty and administrators made many decisions together, literally sitting in the same room, participating on the same committees, reviewing data together, and attending the same open hearings. The same was true at KSU, where it was through joint conversations that the dean, department chair, and the sole faculty member in Counseling Psychology reached the conclusion to discontinue the program. On the other hand, the decision making processes were different at OSU and UR. At these institutions, although faculty were "involved" they tended not to be involved sitting around the table making decisions with administrators.

The surprising factor about the variations in the degree to which the processes were shared was that at none of the institutions did faculty complain that they had not been involved enough or in legitimate roles, nor did administrators complain that faculty were involved too much or in the wrong ways. Even though the processes varied, all met a satisfying threshold of collaboration, which tended to be as determined by the history, norms and expectations of the campus than by any other factor (such as national standards proposed by the AAUP or AGB). Although the amount and types of involvement of the various groups were dependent upon the process used, all of these institutions had an "adequate" amount of sharing in the decision making process. For example, at UMCP, faculty and administrators made most decisions jointly through APAC, or faculty made decisions independently through PCC or the senate. At OSU decisions were made sequentially—administrators passed their recommendations to FCG, who returned their modifications to administrators for the final decision. It is unlikely that either of these processes would be acceptable if attempted at the other institution, but at home they were acceptable because they were expected.

The Role of Governance

The processes used at the four institutions varied greatly. They occurred in different time-frames, with a different number of steps, in opportunities for appeal, and in the number and types of people involved. Nevertheless, they all included, at some level, a commingling of faculty and administrators working together. They all were shared processes. Shared governance facilitated the discontinuance process in three ways.

First, governance provided the stage from which administrators could gain a commitment and persuaded the campus of the seriousness of the problems. Leaders evoked symbols such as the enhancement plan at UMCP, and at UR the dean and provost gave presentations on the dangers of endowment drain and high tuition discounts. At OSU, the president and provost, by simply requesting the formation of FCG, symbolically articulated the severity of the task created by Ballot Measure Five. Governance bodies, places where faculty and administrators come together to make decisions, became the platform from which problems were articulated, the situation's seriousness conveyed, and direction set.

Second, shared governance brought the various interest groups together in legitimate ways to accomplish a high stakes task. Shared governance became the place to create supportive coalitions. These processes played themselves out in established governance bodies (APAC and PCC at UMCP, FCG at OSU, CDC at UR, and CAC and EPC at KSU) that had campus legitimacy, rather than in newly created and never tried, ad hoc structures. Attention to process is important because procedural violations can quickly become a rallying call for opposing interest groups. Academic leaders benefited from utilizing decision making bodies and processes already viewed as legitimate rather than trying to develop ad hoc committees that have to overcome suspicion or that need to spend their limited time and energy gaining acceptance. By building on established legitimacy, academic leaders avoided debates over representation, authority, decision-making turf, and inclusion. The history of the institution already has determined those answers. Outside a legitimate and time-tested arena, the efforts to close programs may have fallen under suspicion.

Third, shared governance provided a mechanism to correct potential errors. Administrators recognized that they did not have all the information required to make the best decisions for the university. Thus, they involved faculty, who have different perspectives and experiences to help them understand the implications of closing certain programs. At UMCP,

OSU and UR programs were removed because of insights provided by faculty, and faculty at KSU through its EPC and the senate, approved the decision. Administrators asked faculty groups (summer sub-committees at UMCP, FCG at OSU, CDC and individual faculty at UR, and EPC and senate at KSU) to help them understand the effects of closures and prevent missteps. Because shared governance provided a mutual veto, poor decisions were avoided.

Implications

The findings refute two commonly held myths of shared governance: First, faculty won't participate constructively in institutional decision making, particularly in decisions that may have a negative effect on colleagues. Second, faculty are responsible for the effectiveness of shared governance. The findings also point to legitimacy in the process as a centerpiece of shared governance. Finally, they suggest modifications to AAUP program termination procedures.

Shared Governance Can Be Consistent with Hard Choices

Discontinuing academic programs—making hard choices—is possible in an environment of shared decision making. The processes described here suggest that faculty in some conditions are willing and able to participate in making potentially adverse decisions, and their involvement adds value.

Critics suggests that shared governance weakens presidential leadership and makes it difficult, if not impossible for institutions to be responsive and adaptive (for example, Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities, 1996). Other higher education commentators call for rethinking governance structures and processes, claiming they are outdated models and ill-suited for today's world. The findings of this study do not support these views. When hard decisions needed to be made, faculty and administrators (and, in one case, the board) worked together to get the job done. This study challenges frequently articulated beliefs that faculty cannot and will not make hard decisions, that they are more concerned with preserving the status quo than making institutionally beneficial decisions, and work to prolong rather than expedite campus decision-making. It additionally refutes the belief that more authority for administrators will lead to better institutional decision making. Precisely because of their different understanding of the institution, faculty made important contributions that administrators were unable to provide. For example, faculty at UMCP investigated the implications and collected information to inform the process through APAC sub-committees and

PCC open hearings. Shared governance does not have to be a bottleneck; it can add value to campus decision making.

At the same time, this study does not suggest that governance always works well and cannot be improved or that the structures on most campuses are always effective. Nor does it deny the possibility that administrators invoke shared governance to insulate themselves from criticism and accountability. By sharing decision making, the burden and responsibility become those of all involved. This study also does not suggest that all types of governance structures at all types of institutions (e.g., liberal arts colleges) work well.

Some faculty did resist program discontinuance, but those successful at overturning decisions (mathematics faculty at UR) did so outside formal governance structures. It was not the fiery protest on the faculty senate floor that lead to the changes, but rather the coalition building with strong external groups that brought about the changes.

Administrative Responsibility for the Sharing of Governance

The experiences of these four institutions challenge the notion of who is responsible for "good" shared governance. Faculty frequently are identified as the weak link in shared governance (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 1996; Benjamin, Carroll, Jacobi, Krop, & Shires, 1993; Kennedy, 1994). They typically are criticized as protecting the status quo, slowing (or halting) campus decision-making, and for being parochial and not concerned or informed about institutional matters. Critics may unduly place the burden for governance's problems on faculty. The faculty at these four institutions understood the challenges facing the institution, recognized the importance of crafting a good process, and helped determine beneficial outcomes. Their recognition and acceptance of the challenge was the result, in a large part, to effective administrators who translated environmental pressures, framed the challenge in meaningful ways, and designed a process that allowed faculty to contribute. Administrators at UMCP brought faculty via APAC into the immediate discussions. OSU had a previously faculty-approved discontinuance procedure that outlined meaningful faculty roles. How administrators treat faculty shapes the ways in which faculty react within the governance arena. When administrators act in ways consistent with trusting faculty and appreciating their special knowledge and perspectives, the experiences suggest that faculty should play active and complementary roles in governance. Administrators must acknowledge their own roles as participants in the shared governance process.

The experiences of these four campuses suggest that the responsibility for creating good shared governance is itself shared between faculty and administrators. Faculty are responsible for making institutional issues a priority, for coming to the table prepared and informed, and for acknowledging the time frame within which decisions must be reached. Administrators are responsible for creating the climate in which good governance can operate. Where administrators do not frame the challenges in ways meaningful to faculty, are unable to stress the importance of the tasks at hand, do not draw upon legitimate avenues of faculty involvement, and do not tap faculty strengths such as exploring implications and acting as systems of checks and balances, shared governance cannot be expected to work well.

Additionally, formal structures are only part of the acceptable and effective shared governance processes. Important faculty-administrative decision making occurred outside formal governance structures, such as at UMCP through the summer sub-committees, at UR through the individual interviews, or informal "kitchen cabinet" structures at UMCP and UR. Administrators may carefully go outside the system but only in legitimate ways, leaving the formal structures to play regulatory roles. Nevertheless at some point the decisions made outside formal governance must be intentionally brought inside the system, such as into the PCC and senate at UMCP and the CAC and EPC at KSU.

Legitimacy is the Coin of the Governance Realm

One governance system does not fit all. Each of the four institutions followed different processes and involved faculty and administrators (and trustees) through different structures, at different times and for different purposes. What about these different processes was essential for shared governance to allow and enhance difficult decision making?

These four cases demonstrate that leaders must create decision making processes that meet institutionally-defined expectations for legitimacy. As the provost from Columbia asks in an earlier quotation, who has the authority to make decisions and what are the processes by which they are legitimated? Legitimacy is important to program discontinuance because leaders who develop processes that are perceived as illegitimate face having their process derailed by opposing interest groups. Illegitimacy creates opportunities for "work avoidance" (Heifetz, 1994), which are distractions that "divert attention from the issues on the table and diminishes a sense of shared responsibility" (p. 38). By creating legitimate processes that are procedurally defensible, leaders focus attention on making hard decisions.

Legitimacy is grounded in campus expectations, histories and norms. For example, faculty at the four institutions were all "involved," but the type and extent of involvement varied, from consultation at UR to making the final decisions at UMCP, and from periodic at OSU to constant at UMCP. "Good governance depends on acceptance, and to be acceptable, it must conform to the expectations of the participants" (Birnbaum, 1992, p. 179). Solutions to questions, such as who should be involved and in what ways, are not transferable. What is important to shared governance is not the specific elements of each process but the fact that each is defensible in terms of the expectations of various groups.

Recommendations for AAUP Guidelines

The AAUP (1995) proposes four guidelines for discontinuing academic programs. Three of the four recommendations are consistent with this study's findings: (1) faculty should be involved early on and in meaningful ways; (2) faculty should provide "considerable advice" on the long- and short-term effects of the closures; and (3) tenure should be protected[4]. (Number 4 is discussed below.) Without these three elements the processes at the four institutions might not have been successes. Faculty easily could have formed opposing coalitions around key procedural points halting the process if they were not involved in meaningful ways early on in the process, if they (or their representatives via governance) did not have opportunities to explore the implications and provide advice, or if tenured faculty had been terminated. Additionally, because faculty gave "considerable advice," administrators at OSU, UR and UMCP revised some of their original recommendations. The outcomes may have been damaging had faculty not articulated potential negative unintended consequences.

The fourth AAUP recommendation not followed was faculty having the "primary responsibility" for determining where closures occur. At none of the four institutions did faculty have the primary responsibility. Administrators made most of the decisions. Only at UMCP were faculty partners in crafting the recommendations, and only there did faculty make the final recommendations (through the senate). Nonetheless, at UR, OSU and KSU, faculty played meaningful roles, providing information and counsel, and helping to explore the potential implications of closures.

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[4] For further discussion of tenure and academic program discontinuance, please refer to the longer study -------- (1998).

The findings suggest recommendations that the AAUP might its policy. First, the AAUP might recommend that program closures occur in conjunction with other steps to save money; that alone or as first steps they may be less likely to succeed (something that happened at all four institutions). It might specify using faculty governance groups to explore the potential implications of proposed closures, which might be done through open deliberations (such as at UMCP) or in confidence (such as at OSU or UR). The AAUP might also include language that specifies that acknowledges the processes used to close programs most likely will differ across institutions because of differences in institutional cultures and norms in decision making. A process that might be acceptable to faculty at one campus where they play consultative roles (OSU) might not be acceptable at another where faculty are equal partners in decision making (UMCP). The AAUP should recognize the important role administrators play and the direction they provide in program discontinuance. In none of these four cases did faculty carry the process alone. Finally, the AAUP might note that retaining tenured faculty is important to keeping the institution focused and the process on track. At the same time keeping tenured faculty may create a trade-off in terms of generating significant savings.

Beyond specific discontinuance guidelines, the findings suggest that AAUP should reconsider its stance on the broader topic of shared governance. The concept of shared governance in practice is fairly broad: It includes faculty-administrator collaboration that occurs both inside and outside the formal governance structure; it varies by institution as one size clearly does not fit all; it may include decisions where parties act sequentially (e.g., OSU where administrators passed decisions to FGC, who in turn passed its decisions back to administrators) and jointly (e.g., UMCP where both faculty and administrators sit on APAC); and it is based upon institutionally-defined norms, not on a schema adopted from the outside. Finally, and possibly most importantly, shared governance that is successful (a structure and process that allows many constituencies to make agreeable decisions) is dependent upon expectations that the various parties find acceptable.

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